



Illustration: Natalia Kulka

Central and Eastern Europe in Academic Internationalization: Peripherality, Neoliberalism, and Knowledge Production

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Abstract: The article reflects on knowledge production in the context of research internationalization, seen as an aspect of a broader trend in the changing higher education and other academic institutions. It focuses on Central and Eastern Europe as a post-communist and (semi)peripheral region, which has been the subject of historical and theoretical analysis often accompanied by epistemological reflection among researchers. As an introduction to the theme of the issue, the article addresses questions concerning epistemic approaches to Central and Eastern Europe via critical reflection on the “post-socialism” framework. The authors discuss major analytical responses of scholars in this research field, including the authors of articles published in this issue of *Studia Litteraria et Historica*, such as peripherality, postcolonialism, and rethinking of the category of the “East”. In the concluding part, they outline possible directions for further inquiry, including a spatial-temporal conceptualization informed by Wallerstein’s historical social science as well as ethical considerations in the current political context shaped by international security concerns as much as epistemic ones.

Keywords: Central and Eastern Europe; core-periphery relations; knowledge production; neoliberalism; post-communism/post-socialism; research internationalization

The idea of this issue of *Studia Litteraria et Historica* came from the reflection on the academic field in post-socialist/post-communist countries of Europe, specifically in the context of what is experienced, practiced, and conceptualized as internationalization in scholarly research.¹ One must note that this is an aspect of a broader internationalization trend that most notably includes the organization and transformation of higher education, for example, mobilities of learners and teachers as well as relative international uniformity of academic structures, rules of action, and cultures of knowledge circulation. The task of reflecting on the condition of academic institutions and actors of the former “Second World” (Nowak, 2022) requires making sense of economic and political forces that have simultaneously changed and sustained the realities of “post-communist” decades and positioning the academic realities of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) within ongoing debates on neoliberalism, modernization, and new conservatism. The histories and historical interpretations of the region provide one set of lenses to view the problems of academic knowledge production and circulation, another set being the heuristic and conceptual devices, which serve the self-reflection of scholars as much as their assumed mission and contracted job of knowing the world. This issue of *Studia Litteraria et Historica* seeks to bring some of these considerations together by taking the notions of core and periphery and other perspectives as a framework for exploring aspects of knowledge production. In particular, we are focused on the question of how to know CEE, that is, how CEE can be conceptualized through interaction between concepts originally developed elsewhere and new ideas advanced by scholars (both Eastern Europeans and outsiders) engaged specifically with the region. We are also interested in how the core/periphery dynamics manifest themselves in evidence from specific international research fields. The purpose of this introduction is threefold: before discussing empirical and theoretical contributions to this issue by authors representing different thematic and methodological contexts, we address some general issues concerning epistemic approaches to CEE via critical reflection on the “post-socialism” framework; and in the final part we outline possible directions for further inquiry though our thematization is far from definite. Rather than authoritatively summarizing the “state of the art” in the discursive field of internationalization and knowledge production, we seek to formulate a number of problems – some of which are, inevitably, restated after other authors – that have not found their place in this issue but are clearly linked to or are extensions of our authors’ articles.

The answer to the question, what is Central Eastern Europe (CEE), is to reveal the location of the one who provides the answer, which can signify a particular way of

1 On a personal note, the editorial project of the authors of this text, is a result and a stage of our now decade-long intellectual cooperation and exchange between an Anglophone “Westerner” and a Slavic “Easterner” imbued with reflections on how we produce, distribute, and use knowledge in social sciences and humanities, coming from diverse backgrounds but sharing visions of the world and aligning in matching our ideas to work with, through and despite differences, disparities and barriers. This has been for us a micropolitical project in lifelong learning and unlearning of how we are positioned internationally in the scholarly world of knowledge, and what we can or cannot do about it.

knowing CEE, of it being an epistemic space as much as a political one. “Post-socialist”, “post-communist” or “post-Soviet” are concepts seeking to capture a way of knowing CEE. Indeed, these concepts were mobilized by intellectuals across Europe to describe, explain, and temporalize the changes resulting from the collapse of state socialism, the use of the prefix “post” signifying a temporal break. Another concept was mobilized in conjunction with this temporal break, that of “transition”. CEE was known firstly in terms of its break with one form of modernity, socialism, and its transition to (or rather the restoration of) the now triumphant capitalism. As Gil Eyal, Iván Szélényi, Eleanor R. Townsley (Eyal et al., 2018) have noted, the demands of transition were profound, requiring the creation of capitalism in the absence of capitalists, and so the need, discursively and institutionally, to construct something resembling a capital-owning class. Framed by this sense of transition, “post-socialism” – a term used primarily by Western scholars – denotes both the deconstruction of certain types of state structures, politics, economies, and subjectivities, and their reconstruction within liberal capitalist imaginaries. While post-socialist scholarship was never homogenous, it was critiqued for its orientalizing of CEE societies. Specifically, it was charged with carrying a bias towards Western conceptions of the “East” as backward, undeveloped, trapped in tradition or Soviet mentalities, and requiring modernization. This orientalist way of knowing CEE, flattens the different cultural and political historical developments contained in the reductive concept of post-socialism. The forms of governance and political cultures of communism, or state socialism, were never homogenous. The region in question was only partially dominated by the USSR, with Yugoslavia and Albania eventually splitting from the bloc. Economic and labor policies; public freedoms and the degree of police repression; education structures; cultural politics; women’s rights; the treatment of national minorities; the ways the citizens coped with crises or rebelled; and how the societies undertook and experienced their ways out of the system – all these and many other aspects of life not only varied greatly among states but also changed overtime within them.

Post-socialism can carry with it the legacies of Cold War area studies as well as imagery exploited in literature and popular culture (Murawska-Muthesius, 2006; Parfianowicz, 2020). The prefix “post-“ suggests a clear temporal rupture between a failed past and an expectant future. Yet there is ample evidence of continuities in terms of structures, ways of thinking, and social practices. Martin Müller (2020b), for instance, asks if post-socialism is useful as an analytical category if the societies it refers to are no longer just post-socialist but have become new entities. Post-socialism can also suggest that the experience of state socialism was the only frame within which to understand these societies between 1917/1945 and 1991. However, others seek to continue working with this combination of post-socialism and transition as still offering analytical power (e.g. Bailyn et al., 2018).

But Central and Eastern Europe is a composite and itself a contentious concept. What does “central” refer to? Attila Meleghe (2006, 2018) notes that Central Europe is a product of political and cultural construction nested within a wider hierarchical civilizational ordering of the world emerging out of European colonial imaginations. In line with the work of Larry Wolff (1994), the further east one went in Europe, the more backward and uncivilized it was perceived to be. Central Europe can itself serve as an orientaling concept to distinguish nations or countries closer to the West, especially with the need to create distance from the Russian-dominated East. Still, definitions will reflect values prevalent in a particular social group or stratum, political tendency, generational unit, intellectual circle, or any other relevant category. Moreover, Central Europe possesses no fixed borders and appears to have multiple “centers” (Zombory, 2018), and this is true when we merge the “Central” together with the “Eastern” into a single concept. CEE can be characterized as once having the enforced political orientation eastward but affirmed cultural orientation toward the west. With EU enlargement and integration of the new states, and with the broadening of the North Atlantic alliance, the chosen political orientation is clearly Western. At the same time, what can be considered as cultural sentiments are a mixture of self-reflected myths of the region and its nations, expressing both their essential “Westness” and essential “Eastness”, along with patterns of belonging, engagement and identity that draw on and contest newer (or not so new) elements ranging from consumerism to environmentalism, from cosmopolitanism to nationalism etc., which contemporary Central-East Europeans in the region and in diasporas worldwide, share with their fellow humans across continents, races, ethnicities, and political divides.

The difficulty of knowing CEE is indeed as similar as it would be for any large and culturally diverse region whose historiography is loaded with (geo)political meanings. The above reflection hints at the questions about the dominance of western, and specifically anglophone, conceptualizations. Scholars have tried a number of theoretical approaches to “know” CEE from within, to resolve problems posed by post-socialism as an organizing concept. Here we briefly discuss some of these approaches: the notion of semiperipherality, the postcolonial framework, and the rethinking of the idea of “East”.

Drawing on concepts developed within Wallerstein’s world-systems approach (Wallerstein, 1974, 2001, 2004), some scholars have sought to analyze CEE as a *semiperiphery* in the global system of knowledge production, distribution, and exchange. Analytically, knowledge systems are perceived as parallel to the structures of the global economy, organized in terms of core regions that dominate knowledge production and circulation, and other regions that are in relations of peripherality or semi-peripherality to the core (Demeter, 2019; Schott, 1998). Core regions dominate through their historically constituted hegemony (that reflects and maintains their geoeconomic and geopolitical power), sustained currently through technologies of university rankings, economic capacity, focus on elite students and academic mobility, control over publish-

ing, and means of knowledge circulation. The global knowledge system closely mirrors that of the global economy, centered predominantly in the Global North. In what sense then is CEE a semi-periphery? David Ost (2018) suggests that Eastern Europe has historically been constituted as a semiperiphery in relation to Western Europe as well as Russia/Soviet Union. Constructions of Europe have of necessity been organized around negative and orientaling definitions of the “East”. However, Ost argues that while the non-Christian east was by definition outside Europe, and therefore peripheral, Eastern Europe’s semi-peripherality was based on its claim on cultural privileges:

Eastern Europe has been exploited but not colonized, subordinated in the world economy but not completely humiliated and degraded. In contrast to the periphery, it has retained a claim on Europeanness, Christianity, whiteness, and the privileges reserved for each. In art and literature, in intellectual as well as political projects, its achievements have always been recognized by the core, even if often as exotica. (Ost, 2018, p. 20)

In the light of Russia’s expansionism during different historical periods, from early modern times to Stalinist imperialism and subordination of non-Russian nations in the Soviet Union to the current war, in which Ukraine is fighting “against a tyranny that is also a colonial power” (Snyder, 2022), the first part of the above quote can be objected to. At the same time, Ost rightly observes that as semiperipheries, CEE countries could be sites for innovative ideas (he cites workers’ management and civil society as prime examples) but lack the resources and influence to manage the impact of these ideas in the core regions. Moreover, CEE knowledge innovations can be appropriated by the West and radically recontextualized, losing their specificity and sometimes returning to CEE in newly articulated forms (Ost uses the example of how the notion of “civil society”, developed by Solidarity in Poland, was transformed into a neoliberal idea in the context of “transition”²). Semiperiphery, as an analytical concept, has therefore been attractive to CEE scholars, including in research on higher education, as a way of knowing the region in its interaction with processes of integration, incorporation, harmonization, and competition enacted predominantly by the core of the global knowledge system.

The postcolonial framework has provided some scholars with a way to think about CEE in its post-socialist condition. Hana Červinková (2012) attempts a dialogue or “thinking between” postcolonialism and post-socialism as analytical approaches, an orientation that promises an “indigenous scholarship in east-central Europe” (p. 155). While the postcolonial approach was originally generated within Western academia, specifically in relation to Western forms of colonialism, Červinková asks what paradigms, concepts, or frameworks can aid a respectful understanding of CEE. She notes an asymmetric relationship between post-socialist and postcolonial scholars: the former learn from postcolonial scholarship, but the latter seldom seem to learn from – as dis-

2 This, however, should not be seen as a one-way process. Local policymakers, intellectuals, and other public actors can also contribute to such recontextualizations.

tinct from learning about – CEE experiences and perspectives. Červinková suggests, however, that there can be a productive dialogue between the two analytical approaches. Based on a review of scholars exploring the articulations between post-socialist and postcolonial approaches, she identifies several strands of this “thinking between”, including a critique of post-socialism as an analytical approach, a reconceptualizing of the concept of “empire”, a deconstruction of the Cold War “three worlds” division, and the related institutional-conceptual distinctions (First world examined through mainstream social science; Second World explored through area studies and post-socialism; and the Third World explored through postcolonialism), and racialization as a practice of internal/external “others” (see also Chari & Verdery, 2009, for a discussion of this latter point). Tamar Koplatadze (2019) reiterates the argument about the potential value of a dialogue between post-socialism and postcolonialism. In a similar fashion, Koplatadze (2019) notes how such a dialogue could provide a more nuanced understanding of the post-socialist reality of CEE, disrupt the East/West dichotomy through a corrective critique of postcolonial study’s reliance on Western imperial histories as a normative model for postcolonial analysis, and enable a revision of both the meaning of post-socialism as a historic phenomenon as well as “the very concepts of Soviet communism and socialism” (p. 470).³

Critiques of the adoption of postcolonialism have led to the exploration of the development of more emic concepts that are better grounded in the realities of the region. Tomasz Zarycki (2014) has offered *Ideologies of Eastness* as one way to overcome both Western-centric ways of knowing CEE and the perceived limitations of postcolonialism. Zarycki’s starting point is that such knowing necessitates confronting a dual process of orientalism. Not only is CEE, and particularly Eastern Europe, the object of orientalizing discourses, but intellectuals from the region produce such discourses, specifically directed at the Soviet or Russian world. Drawing critically on world-systems analysis, postcolonialism and Bourdieu’s theory, Zarycki does not reject Western epistemologies but seeks to re-work them in a way that enables a CEE way of knowing itself without self-orientalizing, and challenges Western intellectuals to re-think their own representations of the region. Internal adaptations of these theoretical ideas to CEE contexts are challenged, in part, as a form of intellectual dependence on the West, an epistemic dependence that has been habituated within liberal intellectual circles. This

3 The difficulties of such a dialogue are captured by the debate between Koplatadze and Viatcheslav Morozov over the latter’s conceptualization of Russia as a “subaltern empire”, and the discussion of the Soviet/Russian world as one of “internal colonization” (Morozov, 2015). Morozov recognizes that defining Russia as subaltern is controversial but argues that in the wider international context, Russia can be analyzed as simultaneously a colonial empire in relation to its near neighbors and a subaltern empire in relation to Western and U.S. hegemony. Koplatadze finds Morozov’s contribution unconvincing, particularly the concept of internal colonization. The internal colonization thesis (see also Etkind, 2011) depicts the relationship between Russia and those in the Russia-dominated world as being distinct from Western forms of colonial imperialism, the adjective “internal” suggesting that the peoples of the Baltic states, Ukraine, for instance, are already part of the Russian/Soviet world and colonialism refers to the domination of a cultural and/or economic elite (see also Tlostanova, 2012). The dispute is exemplary of the problematic nature of taking analytical concepts developed in one politico-historical domain and applying them in a different context without appropriate recontextualization.

critique is supported by defining CEE as a semi-peripheral zone, ambiguously positioned between differently imagined Easts and Wests. Hence, Zarycki's invitation to think about "eastness" rather than "East". At the same time, his approach can raise theoretical doubts, for instance, his use of Said's (2003) notion of *orientalism* reveals limitations in the application of postcolonial frameworks in the CEE contexts (see Nowicka, 2014, for a critical discussion of this and other aspects of Zarycki's analysis).

A more recent attempt has been offered by Martin Müller who asks where the former socialist societies fit in the global ordering if they are "too rich to be in the South, too poor to be in the North ... suspended somewhere in the shadows between the Global North and the Global South, not quite belonging to either" (Müller, 2020b, p. 734). Müller's (2020b) use of "East", in this regard, seeks to denote "an epistemic space – a liminal space in-between North and South" (p. 736), which incorporates CEE but is not necessarily confined to it. He engages with the postcolonialism associated with the Global South as a way to think about how the former Second World can theorize itself beyond Northern or Western-centric epistemologies. For Müller, post-socialism is a limiting concept, and it contains an orientalizing tendency. At what point does post-socialism end, or, as Böröcz (2012) put it in relation to Hungary, are CEE societies caught up in a constant state of "catching up" with the West, always measured in relation to their transition to European modernity? A series of articles was published in the journal *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, critically exploring Müller's idea. Authors argued, for example, that the "East" category, like the "North"/"South" divide obscures class dynamics in societies (Szczęśniak, 2020), risks slipping into essentialism-based reactionary identity politics (Sowa, 2020), or can be difficult to adopt as Central and Eastern Europeans may resist such a conceptualization as it emphasizes their peripherality (Leszczyński, 2020; Zarycki, 2020). Müller's response in defense of the "Global East" category included arguments for contextualized revision of concepts, a comparative approach, and extension of theory (Müller, 2020a). While this debate is needed and inspiring as an intellectual effort, it remains to be seen whether and how new epistemic frames in CEE societies are developed and worked in policy, cultural engagement, and other forms of social practice.

One area where the internationalization of knowledge production has played a key role is higher education. Following the collapse of communism, higher education systems in CEE states witnessed institutional reform, "Europeanisation" of policies, and integration into a globally competitive system of higher education (Dobbins, 2015; Kwiek, 2012), while the sense of peripheral positioning prevailed. Besides economic aspects (underfunding of higher education and science), key features of this relative peripherality under the pressures for internationalization in research and teaching include the impact of the dominance of English as the proxy for academic visibility and value; dominance by Western theories and concepts; and the strength of Anglo-American academia (and other North-Western academic centers) in attracting academic tal-

ent, at the cost of CEE societies. There has been increasing importance of both university rankings as well as citation indexes in the status economy of global higher education (Hazelkorn, 2015; Szadkowski, 2015), and the role of such status indicators as signaling the relative competitiveness of national economies (Kehm, 2014). Evidence suggests that CEE scholars are less cited by Western scholars, find it harder to be published in prestigious English-language publications, and can often lack personal or institutional resources to compete in a hierarchically structured global system of knowledge production (Duszak & Lewkowicz, 2008; Warczok & Zarycki, 2018). As already noted, CEE struggles with Western epistemological dominance. Michał Buchowski (2004, 2014, 2019) has referred to CEE scholarship in his discipline as a “twilight zone anthropology” as we deal with a space that attracts limited, if any, interest from the centers of global higher education, a space of limited influence on the main currents of scholarship. Consequently, the concepts and words with which the peoples of CEE speak of themselves or theorize more generally are marginalized by those prevailing in the West. Buchowski makes particular reference to the impact on Polish anthropology but also on the distorting effects of imported concepts, such as post-socialism. Sociologist Norbert Petrovici (2015) notes how the tendency for conceptual importation has the effect of producing CEE as an “enclave”, a space that contributes empirically but not epistemologically. Other sociologists (Kulpa & Mizielińska, 2011; Mizielińska & Stasińska, 2018) have examined how the dominant concepts in sexuality research and queer theory can act as imported, *etic* concepts that might not fully grasp the particularities of CEE circumstances.

The articles published in this issue reflect on various problems discussed so far. They link critical epistemological questions about knowing the historical and contemporary realities of the region as well as questions of visibility and legitimacy of CEE scholars in the international (or internationalized) system of knowledge production. They apply diverse theoretical and methodological tools, from conceptual history to critical theory to quantitative and qualitative analyses of research output through a bibliometric lens.

The discussion of conceptualization of Central and Eastern Europe features prominently in Monika Orechova’s article. While recognizing the diversity of countries thus labeled, the author demonstrates how the uses of this and other terms in the conceptual cluster (Eastern Europe and Central Europe) indicate, mostly in an implicit manner, its asymmetric or special status as opposed to the default and consequentially dominant status of the term “Europe” as referring to the European West. Interestingly, Orechova tracks the conceptual history and distribution of the notion of Central and Eastern Europe during the first “post-socialist” decade (1990–2000), when discussions of regional concepts reflected various ideological stakes involved in defining not merely the paths of political and economic transition but also the broad historical and international orientation of the region and its nations after the Cold War. She employs Ko-

selleck's notions of *space of experience* and *horizon of expectation* to scrutinize how the conceptual cluster "was delineated via its former status as post-Soviet or post-Communist, which can be understood also as a reaffirmation of the 'Eastness' and 'backwardness' of the region", and how these countries "are expected to move towards Europe, thus, implying that the region is not quite Europe yet". Through the lens of conceptual history (*Begriffsgeschichte*), Orechova analyses a corpus of publications in educational research during the indicated decade. She shows that while in research fields such as education, the references to regional concepts are often meant as a descriptive geographical distinction, neither these concepts nor their usage are neutral. Indeed, the constructivist sensibilities that developed in human and social sciences in the later part of the previous century have taught us how politically loaded and contentious certain conceptual labels can turn out to be, especially when the realities they are intended to grasp constitute spaces of conflict, struggle, identity debate or a subject of ongoing societal change. Thus, scholarly conceptualizations of regions are also not free of political dimensions. One notable finding is that despite the significant interchangeability of the labels within the conceptual cluster, the specific label of "Central and Eastern Europe" gained its prominence over "Eastern Europe" from the mid-1990s onwards. This likely reflects the political mood of the time at least in those states of the region, where the Soviet legacy seemed already left behind and aspirations of integration with the Western structures were gaining clearer shape. The article inspires a further discussion on Central and Eastern Europe as not only the West's conceptual and political "other" but also as a region and concept with its own internal asymmetries, inequalities, distinctions, and differentiated national and subregional trajectories, only partly reflected in a "glance" from the outside.

Commonality and internal diversity of Central and Eastern Europe within a broader European system of knowledge production emerge as a finding also in the article by Paweł Swianiewicz and Maria Niedziółka (Swianiewicz & Niedziółka, 2023). The authors address the problem of uneven distribution of knowledge production in the international field of urban studies. They adopt a "dependent development" framework – here represented by a core/periphery/semiperiphery triad advanced and popularized in Wallerstein's world-systems analysis approach – to explore the centrality or peripherality of studies conceptualized as visibility of publications and impact on other researchers at home and abroad. Their premise is clear and well-founded in the existing body of literature: studies from academic centers (core areas) get more frequent citations and have a greater intellectual impact than studies from less central zones. "Peripheral scholars" draw on conceptual and methodological innovations conceived in the core, whereas their own contributions tend to provide local empirical evidence to ideas formed elsewhere. It is not the case that non-core academics do not develop brilliant and adequate research frameworks and theories, but that the structural positioning, economic advantages, international prestige, and historical hegemonies of centrally lo-

cated institutions, research networks and individuals, privilege the core-based output while the concepts and methods developed in the periphery (often within well-established traditions or schools of thought) go unnoticed or are dealt with marginally. With the inevitable risk of oversimplification, but with a substantial validity as to the general tendency, one can thus back the authors' premise that peripheral research tends to imitate the core, tends to focus on local publishing in a national (i.e. nowadays non-English) language and seeks collaborators and co-authors in more central regions with the purpose of getting noticed in the international scene of knowledge exchange. Swianiewicz and Niedziółka use a bibliometric approach to highlight core-periphery dynamics in the second decade of the 21st century based on over two thousand publications from six international journals. Their findings confirm the overall peripheral and semi-peripheral position of almost all countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Yet the authors' observations are more nuanced as the positioning of the region in European knowledge production can be divided into peripheral and partially peripheral (the term used to avoid relationality implicated in the "semi-peripheral") with one "partially central" country (the Czech Republic). The presence of Spain and Italy in the European core alongside the Netherlands, Sweden and Germany, is another interesting observation, which the authors explain on the basis of earlier literature indicating the shift in recent decades of the two Southern European countries towards the global core. This reflection inspires the question of future dynamics in the positioning of research coming from Central and Eastern Europe.

Redi Koobak and Raili Marling address the problem of knowledge production under neoliberal policies that have formed much of the academic condition in "post-transition" countries in the region (Koobak & Marling, 2023). They focus on Estonia as a case in point, a country whose Soviet past they argue was an example of colonialism by the dominant Russia. Such a focus allows them "to investigate how current margins at the East of Europe are implicated in keeping up the colonial mode of power that still endures in Europe today, including in academia". The neoliberalism of the 1990s and later was seen by policymakers throughout the region as an antidote to the Soviet legacy and a way to overcome the stigma of "easterness". Driven by structural changes in the early 21st century, in academia it meant the intensification of competition (both internal and international), the spread of audit culture, and the pressure to collaborate with the business sector – typical features of contemporary "academic capitalism", Koobak and Marling take up the issue of neoliberalization in demonstrating how progressive ideas, in this case feminism, have been co-opted into neoliberal hegemonic vision of societal change. At the same time, transnational feminism, as the authors argue, has failed to include post-socialist or post-Soviet contexts in its domain of critical reflection. At best, it was scholars from the "West" (or "Global North") who for years spoke for Central Eastern Europe, while following and reproducing the Western theoretical trends has been a way for "Eastern" scholars to gain visibility in prestigious outlets often at

the expense of locally or nationally relevant topics. Thus, the authors' effort to de-center the discussion on decoloniality and feminism by focusing on the region that cannot be squarely placed within the North-South divide. The location of Central and Eastern Europe somewhat off the pivotal categories of the dominant narrative in critical global humanities, can result in scholars explaining their local realities "to the epistemic centers" often not in and not on their own terms – a role and a challenge that many Eastern Europeans participating in international academic networks know quite well. Koobak and Marling suggest a three-fold intervention: telling "better stories", opting for "slow scholarship", and broadening the range of styles and forms of academic practice to allow a greater variety of voices and sensibilities – including art and activism – to participate and contribute to the process of knowledge production. Since the language of decolonizing is not a fixed method but a perspective in knowing the world, their call leaves space for such a variety, especially for "local East-East dialogues" oriented "to exchange proposals for academic change".

While each of these articles demonstrates its unique research agenda, they all are linked to a broader field of scholarly reflection and provide valuable ideas for further empirical and theoretical studies. A range of related themes understandably lie beyond the scope of this issue of *Studia Litteraria et Historica*. Among such themes are those regarding material conditions of knowledge production and circulation, from general questions of how neoliberal capitalism has affected academia in peripheral and semi-peripheral zones, including CEE systems and institutions, to specific topics such as the international division of labor in research and higher education, the question of ownership, the place of universities and research institutes in the structures of and policies on public services, collective and individual agency of academics responding to organizational changes etc. Some administrative aspects have been among the key points debated within and around academic communities in recent years, for example: performance-based assessment and audit culture; research selectivity in publication; grants and review regimes; the meanings of university rankings; journal metrics and publishers' prestige.⁴ Among issues that still await in-depth analysis and open debate are such factors of social dynamics as the markers of success and distinction in academic roles and careers, cultural capitals in core-periphery academic relations, impact on students and teaching, continuity and change in professional socialization of academics. Ideas of knowledge production/distribution and ways of analyzing internationalization are likely to be explored further in terms of epistemic domination, marginalization and resistance (including politicized responses), intra-regional and cross-regional comparisons, linguistic impact, methodological innovations in gathering new data and challenging the existing perspectives, etc. The list goes on.

4 For an example of a recent analysis of patterns in international publishing in political science since 2000, see Kaiser et al. (2023).

As a concluding point, we wish to reflect again on our starting point, that of Central and Eastern Europe as a political, (multi)cultural, and epistemic reality. The idea of the issue theme of academic knowledge production was framed by a collection of terms – peripherality, neoliberalism, internationalization – that not merely serve as abstract theorizations but are embedded in the spatial and temporal qualities of the changing world. Therefore, referring to a conceptualization of space and time seems indispensable in reflecting on CEE as a historical and discursive formation. Here we again take inspiration from Immanuel Wallerstein (2001, pp. 139–144) and his notion of Time-Space, inspired by Braudel's categorization of social-historical time. This conception differs from other social science approaches that use similar terminology such as time-space compression in “postmodern” capitalism (Harvey, 2003). Wallerstein argues that the temporal and spatial are inseparable, delineating distinct types of TimeSpace: episodic-geopolitical, cyclical-ideological, structural, and transformative. We do not have space here to fully discuss the features of these different types, but it is worth pointing to how our understanding can be informed by this approach. Much of our above discussion on CEE, inasmuch it concerns realities shaped by the Cold-War “East/West” division and post-1989/1991 transformations, can be located within *cyclical time* and its corresponding *ideological space*. In fact, this is the prime exemplification that Wallerstein uses in an essay published originally in the late 1980s. While his example could not account for “post-socialism”, his conceptualization holds true for the later decades too, because we see how today's epistemic concerns are shaped by middle-term developments prior to 1989. These categories are linked with a period that is “too long to be called the time-span of an event” (Wallerstein, 2001, p. 141). But Wallerstein's framework allows us to situate ways of knowing CEE within even longer historical processes, those of structural time and space of the (modern) world-system, that is, the capitalist world-economy. Central and Eastern Europe may, in fact, be seen in the global and long-term historical context of other (semi)peripheries, colonial/postcolonial and imperial/postimperial dynamics that span over centuries rather than decades (unlike the case with the ideological “East/West” division of the Cold War and post-communism). This perspective has been useful in the discussion on historical peripheralization, underdevelopment and the challenges of modernization and “catching up” as well as the changing and contested conceptions of CEE (on the conceptions of the region's long-term development, see Sosnowska, 2019; on peripherality and “political epistemologies” in Eastern European science in the interwar period, see Surman et al., 2018).

Therefore, what may be expected to be a convincing and fruitful angle to explore the CEE that lasts and changes at the same time, is the linkage between structural macrohistories on the one hand, and local microhistories and individual biographies on the other – like in the classic formula for the *sociological imagination* (Mills, 1959). Linking social structures with human agencies may also be aided by taking up yet another type of TimeSpace as outlined by Wallerstein: the transformative moment ex-

pressed by the concept of *kairos*, or the “TimeSpace of human choice” (Wallerstein, 2001, pp. 146–147). With multiple crises worldwide to which multiple collective actors respond with visions and aspirations, scholarly considerations emerge that attend not only to how and why things are but also to what choices emerge and how to go about them. As part of our discussion has shown, such considerations are today at the heart of research on CEE. And there are moral stakes too. A tool for tackling the conflicted world, our knowledge rests on ideas and concepts that require ethical as much analytical scrutiny in making this knowledge. The Ukrainian scholar Olesya Khromeychuk (2022), cited by Monika Orechova (2023) in this issue, posed the question of the location of her country in geographic, political and epistemic imageries, thus setting out the issue of the relationship between knowledge and security in the time of Russia’s military aggression and varied reactions (some of them not unproblematic) in the “West” and in a broader arena of world politics (see also Hendl et al., 2023). This particular example shows that we are not likely to leave the discussion on the past, current status and the future directions of Central and Eastern Europe for years to come.

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**Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia a umiędzynarodowienie akademickie.
Peryferyjność, neoliberalizm i produkcja wiedzy**

Abstrakt: Artykuł podejmuje temat produkcji wiedzy w kontekście umiędzynarodowienia badań naukowych na tle szerszych zmian szkolnictwa wyższego i innych instytucji akademickich. Koncentruje się na Europie Środkowo-Wschodniej jako regionie postkomunistycznym i (pół)peryferyjnym, będącym obiektem analiz historycznych i teoretycznych oraz rozważań epistemologicznych. Jako wprowadzenie do tematu numeru, artykuł porusza zagadnienia związane z różnymi podejściami do badań Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Istotne miejsce zajmuje krytyczny namysł nad koncepcją „postsocjalizmu”. Autorzy omawiają główne pomysły analityczne w tym polu badań, takie jak peryferyjność, postkolonializm czy nowe ujęcia kategorii „Wschodu”, uwzględniając także propozycje prezentowane w artykułach z niniejszego numeru „*Studia Litteraria et Historica*”. W części końcowej zarysowują możliwe kierunki dalszych badań, w tym konceptualizację czasoprzestrzenną osadzoną w perspektywie historycznych nauk społecznych Wallersteina, a także rozważania etyczne w obecnym kontekście politycznym, kształtowane zarówno przez refleksję wokół kwestii epistemicznych, jak i obawy związane z bezpieczeństwem międzynarodowym.

Wyrażenia kluczowe: Europa Środkowo-Wschodnia; neoliberalizm; postkomunizm/postsocjalizm; produkcja wiedzy; stosunki centrum-peryferie; umiędzynarodowienie badań



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